

SFA Focus Group

Diverse Groups and Performance Measures

Opening Email:

Focus Group Participants--Diverse Groups and Performance Measures,

Welcome to our on-line SFA Focus Group. Below are questions to guide your discussion. Begin the process by answering the questions below, sending your response as a reply to this email. Your response will be sent to all focus group members and your identity will be protected.

As other members submit their responses feel free to respond to their input, thereby creating an interactive on-line dialogue. Participation can occur anytime over the next two days. Facilitators will be on-line observing the dialogue and ensuring that session ground rules are being followed. Enjoy the process and have fun!

SFA Question # 81: Diverse groups (for example, work teams, customers) participate in the development of performance measures where I work

- 1. Are you familiar with the performance measures for your immediate organization?*
- 2. At what level in your organization are performance measures developed?*
- 3. What are your suggestions for involving diverse groups in the development of your organizations performance measures?*
- 4. If challenged, how would your work group come up with performance measures that help managers make better decisions about program directions and changes?*
- 5. What other suggestions or ideas for improvement can you offer?*

Message:

Members, if you have a signature card engaged on your email identity preferences, please disengage it for purposes of this exercise to protect your anonymity.

Barbara

Message:

- 1. Are you familiar with the performance measures for your immediate organization?*
Yes.

2. At what level in your organization are performance measures developed?

Headquarters develops performance measures for our organization. In some cases Regional teams with field office representation provide initial recommendations. In addition to the national performance measures, regional headquarters produce regional performance measures for field offices. These are developed by regional headquarters. Local office managers are given the opportunity to review and comment on the regional measures. Local office managers also develop their own performance measures. These are often based on national measures and regional measures, as well as addressing important performance areas not covered in the regional and national performance measures. Local office staff provide input to help develop these local measures.

3. What are your suggestions for involving diverse groups in the development of your organizations performance measures?

To improve the validity of performance measures so that they measure what is really important, we've got to insure that customer input from the full spectrum of customers is incorporated. In addition, employees from local offices need to participate on teams that develop the organizational and regional performance measures that impact their work. In addition, scientists that understand the the state-of-the-art science and technology and the impacts implementation would have on improving performance.

4. If challenged, how would your work group come up with performance measures that help managers make better decisions about program directions and changes?

Step one would be to review the agency and local mission statements, vision, and core values. A list would be developed of the products and services that are most important for us to meet our mission. Step two would be to meet with customers to find out what products and services have the most impact on their mission. Also, we would have to assess how well current products and services meet their needs and identify shortcomings. Step three would be a joint employee/customer team to develop areas where performance needs to improve and performance measures are needed. Step four would be for the employee/customer team to develop action plans and expected level of improvements that can be achieved based on known science and technology. Ability to fund these improvements would have to be assessed as well. Step five would be to implement the action plan and set realistic milestones based on the expected improvement from each years set of steps in the action plan. Step six would be to have the joint employee/customer team to review progress annually and make adjustments to the milestones and action plans.

5. What other suggestions or ideas for improvement can you offer?

Managers and employees need to focus on the implementation of the action plans, rather than wheter or not the performance measures are being met at an individual office. Making decisions based on what 'looks good' in the performance measures is an unwise tactic. The focus needs to be on using the best science and technology available and on what is right for the customers and partners we are serving in that

given situation. Hopefully, if the performance metrics are well designed, the good numbers will often result from such an approach. We can't let the tail, "performance measures" wag the dog, our products and services to our customers.

Message:

1. Are you familiar with the performance measures for your immediate organization?
I am fairly familiar with the performance measures within my office.

2. At what level in your organization are performance measures developed?
I assume all levels have input, from the general workforce and 1st tier of managers on up to DOC's management. Additionally, customers have an impact on performance measures through constructive criticism of products and service. However, I believe most of the development occurs from information exchange between the general workforce, 1st tier managers, and Southern Region.

3. What are your suggestions for involving diverse groups in the development of your organizations performance measures?
Input from our customers and community could enhance the performance measures. Community involvement could/should be used as a performance measure, since all members of the NWS workforce are a part of the local community and our mission inextricable from the community's welfare.

4. If challenged, how would your work group come up with performance measures that help managers make better decisions about program directions and changes?
First, the program direction should be clearly defined and potential goals and timelines should be developed. Second, a best-case scenario and worst-case scenario should be established and keys to success and failure identified. Third, milestones, with specified timelines, should be established and decision matrices developed to better enable managers to make decisions and to gage their performance. Overall, managers should analyze their program goals for feasibility and value to the organization.

5. What other suggestions or ideas for improvement can you offer?
Communication can always be improved, with an emphasis on upper level management listening and comprehending the content of criticism, questions, and suggestions from lower level managers and the general workforce. Also, the NWS could look to the private sector for benchmarking as well as incorporating forward thinking performance measures that would better align management's and the workforce's goals with that of the organization.

Message:

My initial thoughts....

1. Are you familiar with the performance measures for your immediate organization?

Yes, I'm familiar with performance measures for my program office and for related programs.

2. At what level in your organization are performance measures developed?

Performance measures are general developed at the program office level, or through collaborative efforts such as the strategic planning teams.

3. What are your suggestions for involving diverse groups in the development of your organizations performance measures?

Diverse groups should be involved first in determining the broad outcome measures for NOAA, as part of the overall NOAA strategic planning process. This should include some type of priority setting -- what are the most important things to be tracking, as we can't track and measure everything within existing budgets.

4. If challenged, how would your work group come up with performance measures that help managers make better decisions about program directions and changes?

Given the difficulty in developing environmental performance measures, NOAA should be providing some assistance to line and program offices on how to go about establishing and tracking measure, that contribute to broader NOAA goals and objectives. It seems that there is ample criticism of what's wrong with our measures, but little support to help fix them.

5. What other suggestions or ideas for improvement can you offer?

Data are currently not available for many of the performance measure that NOAA should be using -- it cost money and resources to do so. NOAA needs a corporate approach to identifying the BIG outcome and intermediate outcome measures that it will use, and commit the necessary resources to begin collecting the information to support these measures. For the broad NOAA measures, this has to be a corporate decision, with the appropriate individual programs supporting these efforts. It cannot be left to small program offices to divert resources for this larger purpose. Program offices need to invest in smaller scale measurements and reporting to document their particular program's progress.

Message:

Question 1: I am not specifically privy to performance measures of OICs and MICs, for example.

Question 2: I think performance measures are developed in cooperation with Admin Officers and the Personnel office, that I know of.

Question 3: I am among a number of people who look forward to the day when Diversity Performance will be included in all work descriptions. This is in line with the goal to resolve issues and involve employees at the lowest possible level.

Question 4: A consensus can be draw up using the most useful and helpful of suggestions within the group. As much direct attention as possible must be paid to each issue. We should be specific rather than generalize.

Question 5. From my point of view, if a manager does a good job but literally flunks the Diversity Element in his job discription, that we should be more hesitant to praise and to promote that employee. I would really appreciate your comments about this.

Message:

SFA Q-81

Q-1) yes I am familiar

Q-2) I agree with the input, and that it also is working from the immediate supervisor on up.

Q-3) In addition to the input, it might help to have a so called representative from each group of individual cultural background.

Q-4) Based on the graphs and percent rate of participation in the different catogories.

- A. Define the overall agencies mission and goals.
- B. Determine if we are meeting our customers needs,expectations
- C. There needs to be equal Mgmt and EE participation
- D. Determine what action items are measureable
- E. Go through the problem solving Steps.

Examples:

1). Would be to prioritize the catogories in level of urgency, time required to come (short/long term) because some items might not be able to be handled at the lowest level.

2). To assign individuals with action items, this would show some accountability.

3). a tool to measure to measure the progress.

4). Insure each person from the different backgrounds have equal input in the solution.

5). After each individual has provided their input, then list all the ideas and open it up for discussion, this would allow everbodies input to be heard.

6). Decide on the solutions

7). Perform what was discussed

8). Allow for progress and then re-evaluate

9) . Let the employees know that each of their concerns were worked on and it's results, to encourage them to get involved, it's hard to fix what's not voiced.

Q-5 There needs to as much action as talk = better solutions and better productivity
Additional findings, a closer look at the FSA findings I found alarming is the percentage rates of all the catogories, basically the one's who do the most complaining have the least amount of input and this goes for all ethical backgrounds. And there is good picture of age, ethical, time of service, educational level etc.

Good input from the prior submittals

Message:

1. Are you familiar with the performance measures for your immediate organization?
I'm more familiar with the top level performance measures of my line than I am with those of my organization.

2. At what level in your organization are performance measures developed?
It depends; some boil-up, others are developed at the headquarters level and vetted through the field. It also depends on whether you're talking about a new performance measure or a revision of an existing one. In the latter case, it's often based on a ground-swell of comments from the field saying the PM isn't a good metric. If that opinion becomes dominant, HQ will work to find common ground on what the new measure should be.

3. What are your suggestions for involving diverse groups in the development of your organizations performance measures?

Suggestion 1: Look in the mirror and do something. We need more successes and role models. If we won't do it- who do we expect will?

Suggestion 2: Build it into everyday activities. I've seen many cases in NOAA where individuals and groups don't put effort into an action because they don't see how it is connected to their work. We need to concentrate on showing how seemingly random activities play in the bigger picture.

4. If challenged, how would your work group come up with performance measures that help managers make better decisions about program directions and changes?

My work group would discuss amongst ourselves, identify individuals or groups outside the work group we'd want to get feedback/suggestions from, set a deadline (to keep the process moving), and once we had some, try poking holes in all of them.

5. What other suggestions or ideas for improvement can you offer?

I'll answer this later.

Message:

1) Although I am familiar with performance measures for our local organization, I am not familiar with performance measures NOAA-wide. I believe that is true for most employees. That is why the saying may be true that "the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing." I think everyone within my local organization has a good idea of what the requirements are regarding performance measures. Most people should have an understanding why performance measures are being used. A basic orientation of what the performance measures are would be helpful.

2) Our agency encourages feedback at all levels. More training might encourage more input and feedback. While people like to comment, they might be reluctant to put their comments in writing. Uniformity within the line offices will provide a better sense of fairness.

3) Active recruitment of diverse groups is vital. My comment is that if we can recruit the majority of physically and otherwise challenged people to enter the workforce, and have their co-employees trained to accept them, the government would save literally tens of billions of dollars in payments to people who do not work. This process would involve a major attitude shift both of the new hires as well as their co-workers.

4) I addressed this issue previously. We need to have Diversity rank as one of the highest performance measures, even in job descriptions. The Diversity program should have more clout when it comes to hiring, retention, and promotion and awards.

Message:

I'd like to echo this comment to "have joint employee/customer team to review progress annually and make adjustments to the milestones and action plans. ... Managers and employees need to focus on the implementation of the action plans, rather than whether or not the performance measures are being met at an individual office. Making decisions based on what 'looks good' in the performance measures is an unwise tactic. The focus needs to be on using the best science and technology available and on what is right for the customers and partners we are serving in that given situation.

Hopefully, if the performance metrics are well designed, the good numbers will often result from such an approach. We can't let the tail, "performance measures" wag the dog, our products and services to our customers."

NOAA has many times in the past sought stakeholder and constituent input on strategic plans and performance measures, but rarely involves stakeholders in actually assessing progress toward goals and reviewing and recommending changes to the action plans. External program reviews should be considered more for NOAA programs.

Message:

I to agree that we have come up with a lot of good ideas, but I still believe that in order to use this survey effectively, that accountability plays a big part in this, because if you don't then we would be in the same position we were in before taking the survey.

Message:

I support the suggestions about "involv[ing] stakeholders in actually assessing progress toward goals and reviewing and recommending changes to the action plans." This gets us back to a connection with the people we're really working for- even when you have a disagreement with a customer or group of customers, you are empowered because you know what their objectives- it's so much better than being disconnected and not knowing.

Here are my comments on some of the other questions...

Q: Would you in general say that your entire organization is familiar with the performance measures? Q: Do they understand why performance measures are being utilized, or is it considered another bureaucratic exercise?

Yes, our folks have a general sense of what our performance measures are. That's not to say they understand why we have them or that they believe they are a useful tool. I get the sense most think of PMs as "sticks" rather than goals or "carrots". There's also the sense that they are liked when an organization is meeting or exceeding the targets and disliked when they aren't.

Q: Is there a need for some specific training re performance measures and why NOAA wants and need to implement them?

Yes, but I believe it must be tailored differently from one group to another. The primary concept would be the same for everyone, but the training would focus on how they apply to/what they can do for a particular work group.

Q: Does your organization make an attempt to explain/train their employees on how the process works and how the employee could provide input to the process?

Not well.

Q: Do you feel there is a need for such training?

Yes, if it can be made meaningful at a work group level.

Q: Do you see a need for uniformity in the process across line offices?

At the highest level it should be uniform... and there should be some common language across NOAA so we can communicate.. but again, at the rubber hits the road level, it needs to be personalized.

Message:

Accountability is certainly an important part of the entire effort. What would you, or anyone in this group, like to see accountability dealt with? I am assuming a specific action plan will be developed based on the input from the past two days. Would you like to see a copy of that action plan? Do you want feedback on the progress? Any other ideas or suggestions?
... your friendly facilitator

Message:

I wouldn't mind if my performance plan included links to the organization's performance measures. Without the link you can perform well or perform poorly and it won't matter to the bottom line of how well we do on what counts.

The challenge to all this is that comprehensive efforts (where strategic, budget, operating, and performance plans are all linked to performance) work best and it's one heck of a struggle to get there. It takes years to implement a performance culture that will get good marks- and many people either get frustrated along the way and others expect it to be accomplished in a year or two and give up on it and make changes when it isn't accomplished overnight.

Message:

Yes to all your questions

Message:

Along with the group being provided with feed back, the rest of the folks that took the time to fill out the survey need to know their concerns were addressed.

Message:

Would it be helpful to know how many complaints or eeo's that were filed????????

Message:

I agree that accountability is crucial. Acclocation of funds and how they are budgeted are vital as well.

Message:

Just a reminder to everyone in the focus group that all your ideas comments and suggestions need to be submitted today. I am in the process of summarizing the comments and suggestions that have come in and will them to you in the next hour or so. Feel free to comment on my summary because I don't want to misrepresent your ideas in anyway, or overlook what you consider to be important.

Message:

For the heck of it, I'd like to throw this in.

I've always thought it would be great if we could get Admin leave to go to our alma matters (and other places...) for career days etc. So far the reaction has been - if you really believe in this, take leave. The message I get from that is "we don't support you, and we don't want you to try to recruit people to NOAA"

Message:

1) Although I am familiar with performance measures for our local organization, I am not familiar with performance measures NOAA-wide. I believe that is true for most employees. That is why the saying may be true that "the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing." I think everyone within my local organization has a good idea of what the requirements are regarding performance measures. Most people should have an understanding why performance measures are being used. A basic orientation of what the performance measures are would be helpful.

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4) I addressed this issue previously. We need to have Diversity rank as one of the highest performance measures, even in job descriptions. The Diversity program should have more clout when it comes to hiring, retention, and promotion and awards.

Message:

The attached file represents my effort to summarize the ideas and suggestions that have been submitted over the past two days. Please review and make sure I have properly represented your ideas. I have been a little cryptic to keep the document to a reasonable size, but if I have left out something you want in there please let me know and I will include it.

I don't know for sure if they turn off our focus group at midnight, but if by chance they do, thanks again to all of you for your time and effort. There is a corporate sponsor at NOAA who has had an individual monitoring this effort and they will be meeting in

the next couple of days to discuss the results and what steps should be taken to address these issues.

Thanks again your friendly facilitator.

Message:

I really appreciate the opportunity to participate. SFA is a valuable process and I believe in its importance. If I can give a response to any other questions you have, please do not hesitate to ask. Thanks!

Message:

Two very wise people told me "its hard to learn when you are talking." I have learned a lot in the last few hours. Many thanks. I hope my contribution will be as valuable for you.

Message:

SFA Question # 81: Diverse groups (for example, work teams, customers) participate in the development of performance measures where I work

1. *Are you familiar with the performance measures for your immediate organization?*
No, by design of my supervisor.

2. *At what level in your organization are performance measures developed?*
I don't Know. See 1.

3. *What are your suggestions for involving diverse groups in the development of your organizations performance measures?*

The most important resource of any organization is its people. Every individual in the organization should have value (If the ES/GS-15's can get their job done without GS-5/7's then we need to eliminate the GS- 5/7's and vice versa) and be treated accordingly. Diversity is about being the best. If we choose not to put in the time and effort to be inclusive, then we choose not to be the best. It's difficult to grow if you are surrounded by people who think exactly as you do – some people call these cults.

4. *If challenged, how would your work group come up with performance measures that help managers make better decisions about program directions and changes?*

We are public servants, all human and program decisions should be made accordingly. See below.

5. *What other suggestions or ideas for improvement can you offer?*

A few examples and suggestions:

My job and program were eliminated from the budget. Some of the agencies that use these products/services pay my salary and benefits. The most important performance measures are satisfied customers. We must provide the users with a simple and effective mechanism to communicate their thoughts and concerns.

To do my job most effectively and efficiently, I use products and services from other NOAA offices. In an attempt to communicate my thoughts and concerns to other field offices and the appropriate managers, I identified the AWIPS products and services I used daily.

The problem, where do I communicate these thoughts without stepping on political toes – National level: trickle down, Regional level: trickle down or field level: trickle up(regional & national) and down (forecasters). With the best of intentions, I wrote a generic paragraph (what, when and how I do what I do, how the products/service are used and how effective it is) and specific (why the information for that area is important) paragraph and sent it to the manager of a field office via email and received a thank you email. A week later I called a staff member I knew and no one had seen the email. Approximately 10 days later, another office sent notice their message would be terminated on a specific date and the information contained in the message could be found by checking 3 - 4 additional messages. I emailed the generic message to the manager and received an email reply and phone call explaining they had conducted a state survey to prioritize products and services and that specific product did not have a high state priority. Unfortunately, these inconsistencies tend to be the norm and not the exception. We need to have a simple and effective mechanism to communicate with customers, providers and managers at national, regional and field levels.

Character should be the most important quality when selecting managers and supervisors.

If GS-13 is the managerial level then all GS-12's should be required to take a number of specific managerial courses within a specific time period or they will be unable to get within-grades and cash bonuses. This should be a win-win for everyone even though many of these people will never apply for a managerial job. This trained pool of talent would give management more flexibility when extenuating circumstances occur, level the playing field for those who have managerial ambitions and make the work force more efficient because they have the training to move into short and long term slots with minimal preparation.

Yes there is a problem, complaints filed a year ago have not been resolved within the time limits prescribed by law because of the volume.

Message:

A note to thank each of you for your participation on this focus group -- your input was invaluable and many good suggestions resulted from this on-line dialogue -- I hope you agree. We will forward you a summary of results upon completion. In the meantime, feel free to email me with any question!

Regards,
Barbara

